



Embracing diversity in ASIA through the adoption of Inclusive Open Practices

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**D2.1c – Advancing Inclusive Education: A Comprehensive Analysis of Current Policies
and their Impact in Bangladesh – A Jahangirnagar Viewpoint**

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Advancing Inclusive Education: A comprehensive analysis of current policies and their impact in Bangladesh

*“No investment could be better than investment in education” – Father of the Nation
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1972.*

1. Introduction

Background and Context

The learning landscape in Bangladesh is characterised by a difficult combination of historical social, and financial influences, which has created significant difficulties in education. Colonial customs and internal structures impacted education, creating problems that prevented equal opportunity. Significant progress has been made, but inclusive education is still hard to achieve.

Prejudice against lower castes, tribal circles, and other disadvantaged populations still exists. Additionally, communal divisions and ethnic disputes cause further issues, culminating in a scenario where certain groups are subjected to disavowal and brutality. The modification of laws in Bangladesh shows the evolution of societal movements. Disability rights have had positive transformations through legislation, though difficulties remain. Activists and researchers have highlighted issues of society, including caste, class, religion, disability, and gender as key reasons for disadvantage. In the area of inclusive education, Bangladesh is starting to be recognised, with a focus on the incorporation of people with disabilities. The debate around inclusivity remains in its early stages, much like in India. Activists and experts are progressively driving the conversations to promote guidelines and initiatives that tackle the varied forms of exclusion.

The following analysis collates the constitutional edicts, regulations, civic regulations, and programs in Bangladesh that influence inclusive education. By highlighting the necessity of equal chances for all children, regardless of their circumstances, the research aims to lend

support to progress of inclusive learning practices in Bangladesh. We will consider the following areas, and more:

- measures designed by the Government of Bangladesh,
- campaigns led by non-governmental organisations,
- an assessment of examinations on inclusive education within the Bangladeshi surroundings.

Existing policies

The Disability Act of 2013 in Bangladesh guarantees the right to access education for every person with a disability, including the right to participate in either general or special education, and prohibits discrimination based on disability status [1]. However, contemporary literature suggests that having legitimised guidelines does not always ensure practices that are aligned with the principles of inclusive education (IE) [2]. Teachers' attitudes towards IE and limited professional development are major barriers to implementing IE at the school level [2].

In terms of expanding education for children with disabilities, the government of Bangladesh has enacted policies and legislation in favour of inclusive education (IE) and is a signatory country of major international declarations of IE. The Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) and Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP) are two major projects being implemented in the country over the last 7 years to promote inclusive education. However, the implementation of IE policies in Bangladesh is still a work in progress, and there are challenges to overcome, such as teachers' attitudes towards IE and limited professional development.

1. The report titled ***Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Policy and Practice*** the importance of Inclusive Education for children with disabilities. The report emphasises how the policies and legislation reflect the notion of IE in Bangladesh. Moreover, to understand the practice of IE, it also looks at two major projects, the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) and the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP), which have been implemented in the country over the last decades.

The fundamental philosophy of IE revolves around providing equitable access and active participation for all learners within the school environment. The overarching goal of IE is to serve as a catalyst, ensuring that all students, irrespective of diverse backgrounds, have equal opportunities for access, presence, participation, and achievement in the educational system (UNESCO, 1994). It extends beyond merely integrating marginalised groups into regular classrooms, emphasising a broader philosophy that encompasses all students within a unified educational framework (Ainscow, 2005).

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant global focus on exploring various educational approaches to effectively address diversity in mainstream classrooms. As schools become increasingly diverse, the obligation to meet the needs of students with diverse learning requirements becomes more pronounced. This necessitates a transformative shift in pedagogical thinking for teachers, moving from a teacher-controlled

ideology to a student-centred approach. However, the challenge lies in ensuring that every student is academically engaged within the classroom setting.

Pioneering researchers in inclusive education consistently highlight the multifaceted challenges associated with adopting an inclusive approach. Ainscow (2005) characterises the development of inclusive practices as a complex phenomenon, citing various factors that contribute to this complexity. The absence of a common language among stakeholders, including policymakers, teachers, and the community, is identified as a potential hindrance to the development of an inclusive school culture.

The practice of inclusive education is guided by policies that encompass relevant guidelines, principles, and procedures. Extensive research in the field underlines that despite having noble policies, the goals of inclusive education may remain unrealised if policies fail to inform actual practices (Ainscow & Miles, 2009; Bourke, 2010; Slee, 2006). This is particularly pertinent in contexts where education providers or policymakers, such as those in developing countries, might adopt ideas about IE policy from other contexts without considering the specific nuances of their setting. IE is inherently context-oriented, and teachers are consistently recognised as pivotal agents in fostering inclusivity within classrooms. Policies must acknowledge the temporal impact of contextual aspects and align with the factors encountered by schools. Policies that do not reflect the perspectives of school practitioners may inadvertently complicate the implementation of an inclusive education structure. This chapter, therefore, examines existing inclusive education policies in the context of Bangladesh, discussing implications and raising relevant issues that warrant further analysis.

Cross-cutting issues

Gender Inequality:

- **Access to Education:** Historically, there has been a gender gap in access to education in Bangladesh. Efforts have been made to improve girls' enrolment and retention in schools, but challenges persist, particularly in rural areas.
- **Quality of Education:** Gender disparities also exist in the quality of education, with girls sometimes facing barriers in accessing the same educational resources and opportunities as boys.

COVID-19 Responses:

- **Disruption of Education:** The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of schools worldwide, including in Bangladesh. This disruption posed challenges for students in terms of continuity of education, especially for those without access to online learning resources.
- **Inequality in Remote Learning:** The shift to remote learning highlighted existing disparities, as not all students had equal access to digital devices or a reliable internet connection. This posed challenges for marginalised groups and those in remote areas.
- **Psychosocial Impact:** The pandemic also had psychological and social impacts on students, teachers, and the education system. Coping with the new normal of remote learning and dealing with the broader implications of the pandemic required adaptation and resilience.

2. Review of Existing Policies

Identification and a brief overview of major policies

The government of Bangladesh has taken some legislative and policy steps that indicate commitment to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. Bangladesh Signed and ratified (in 2007) the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD), as well as its Optional Protocol (in 2008). In that agreement, Signatories pledge to develop effective policies and programs at national, sub-regional, and regional levels aimed at systematically improving the conditions of persons with disabilities and harnessing their full development potential.

In terms of **national laws and policies**, the following have the most direct bearing on the rights of persons with disabilities:

- In 1972 the *Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh* guaranteed the basic human rights of every citizen of the country and prohibited any form of discrimination between social groups, including persons with disabilities. Article 15(d) secured the right to social security for persons with disabilities.
 - Bangladesh passed the *Rights & Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act* in 2013. It approached disability from a human rights perspective and provided inclusive education, the reservation of seats on all forms of public transport, accessibility provisions for all public places, equal opportunities in employment, and the protection of inherited property rights. The law requires persons with disabilities to register for identity cards to track their enrolment in educational institutions and access to jobs.
 - Also in 2013, the *Neuro-Development Disability Protection Trust Act* was passed by Parliament, providing for the care, security, and rehabilitation of persons with autism.
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- The first *National Policy for the Disabled* was adopted in 1995, with the aim of mainstreaming disability into the country's development agenda. It gives guidelines for prevention, identification, rehabilitation, education, research and accessibility, among other things. It was followed by a Disability Welfare Act in 2001 and a National Action Plan in 2006, involving 17 different ministries. Since the adoption of the new Disabilities Act in 2013, the policy has been revitalised and coupled with new institutional arrangements and action plans.
 - The *National Child Policy* of 2011 recognised the equal rights of all children, including those with disabilities. It provided dignified treatment of children with disabilities, their inclusion and participation in all aspects of society, including education. It also stated that special education should be provided to children with disabilities who are unable to attend mainstream schools.
 - The *National Building Code* of 2008 defined accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities. Further specifications are contained in the Disabilities Act of 2013, including sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

Adoption of the Inclusive Education Policy (2018): The adoption of the Inclusive Education Policy in 2018 marked a significant milestone in Bangladesh's commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible education system. The policy focused on adapting teaching methods, curriculum, and infrastructure to accommodate diverse learning needs.

Policy and Implications

Here are some key aspects of the policy and its implications:

a. Policy Objectives:

The Inclusive Education Policy outlines clear objectives to promote inclusive education for all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. It aims to address barriers to learning and participation and create an inclusive learning environment in mainstream schools.

b. Focus on Diverse Needs:

The policy recognises and addresses the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities, and emphasises the importance of adapting teaching methods, curriculum, and assessment practices to accommodate these needs.

c. Curriculum Adaptation:

One of the key components of the policy is the adaptation of the national curriculum to make it inclusive. This involves modifying and diversifying the curriculum content to ensure that it is accessible and relevant to all students, including those with different learning needs.

d. Teacher Training and Professional Development:

The policy highlights the need for comprehensive teacher training programs to equip educators with the skills and knowledge required to implement inclusive practices. This includes training on differentiating instruction, using assistive technologies, and creating inclusive classroom environments.

e. Accessible Infrastructure:

The policy addresses the physical accessibility of schools and emphasises the need for infrastructure modifications to make schools more accessible for students with disabilities. This includes ramps, accessible toilets, and other facilities to ensure an inclusive learning environment.

f. Community Engagement:

The policy encourages active involvement and collaboration with parents, communities, and relevant stakeholders to promote awareness and support for inclusive education. This community engagement is crucial for breaking down societal stigmas and fostering inclusive attitudes.

g. Monitoring and Evaluation:

The policy outlines mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of inclusive education practices. This includes the establishment of monitoring bodies and the collection of data to assess the effectiveness of inclusive policies and initiatives.

The adoption of the Inclusive Education Policy reflects Bangladesh's commitment to the principles of inclusivity and equal opportunities in education. While policies provide a framework, successful implementation requires sustained efforts, collaboration with various stakeholders, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that the objectives of the policy are met and that all students can access quality education.

- The *Information and Technology Policy* of 2010 and the *Women Development Advancement Policy* of 2011 specifically refer to improving access and opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Bangladesh has a complex *Social Safety Net*, which includes cash allowances for “financially insolvent” persons with disabilities and injured freedom fighters, stipends for students with disabilities, grants for special schools and the subsidisation of Service and Assistance Centres for persons with disabilities.

3. Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs

Extensive research conducted in Bangladesh emphasises the positive impact of inclusive learning environments on social integration, academic progress, and the overall well-being of children with special educational needs. However, limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of specialised training for educators presents barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Historically, children with disabilities in Bangladesh faced exclusion and limited educational opportunities. However, progress has been made in recent years, with a growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education as a fundamental right. The government and various organisations have taken initiatives to promote inclusive policies and frameworks, but unfortunately, translating them into practical implementation remains a challenge.

Several organisations in Bangladesh actively work towards advancing inclusive education for children with disabilities. For example, the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) focuses on inclusive education advocacy, capacity building, and community mobilisation. They collaborate with government agencies, schools, and communities to ensure inclusive practices and promote the rights of children with disabilities.

Another organisation, Inclusion International Bangladesh, works towards inclusive education by conducting research, providing training, and advocating for policy changes. These organisations, along with others like the Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID) and the Bangladesh Protibandhi Kalyan Samity (BPKS), play a crucial role in creating awareness, influencing policy, and implementing inclusive practices.

4. Accessible Textbooks and Learning Materials

Learning Materials

Ensuring the availability of accessible textbooks and learning materials is a crucial aspect of promoting inclusive education in Bangladesh. Here are some key points related to the provision of accessible educational materials in the context of inclusive education:

a. Braille, Large Print, and Audio Materials:

Efforts have been made to produce textbooks and learning materials in accessible formats, including Braille for students with visual impairments, large print for those with visual challenges, and audio materials for students with reading difficulties.

b. Inclusive Education Policy Implementation:

The Inclusive Education Policy in Bangladesh emphasises the importance of providing accessible learning materials for students with disabilities. This policy serves as a guiding framework for incorporating inclusive practices, including the development of suitable educational resources.

c. Collaboration with NGOs and International Organisations:

Partnerships with organisations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and various NGOs have facilitated the development and distribution of accessible materials. These collaborations often involve funding, expertise, and resources to ensure that the materials meet international standards for inclusivity.

d. Teacher Training on Material Adaptation:

In teacher training programs, sessions on adapting materials to meet the needs of diverse learners are included. Educators are trained to modify content or use alternative formats to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, can access and engage with the curriculum.

e. Awareness Campaigns:

Awareness campaigns have been conducted to highlight the importance of accessible materials and to encourage publishers and educators to consider the needs of students with disabilities in the development of learning resources.

f. Integration of Technology:

Technology is increasingly used to create accessible digital materials. E-books, audiobooks, and interactive multimedia resources provide additional routes for students to access information in ways that suit their learning preferences.

By addressing the accessibility of learning materials, Bangladesh is taking steps to create a more inclusive education system, ensuring that students with disabilities have equal opportunities to engage in learning and succeed academically.

5. Teacher Training Programs

Bangladesh has implemented training programs for teachers to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to support students with disabilities effectively. Here are some key aspects of teacher training programs in the context of inclusive education in Bangladesh:

A. Inclusive Education Policy Implementation:

- Teacher training programs align with the goals outlined in Bangladesh's Inclusive Education Policy to ensure that teachers are familiar with and can effectively implement inclusive practices in the classroom.

B. Curriculum Adaptation and Differentiated Instruction:

- Teachers undergo training on adapting the curriculum to cater to different learning styles and abilities. This includes techniques for differentiated instruction to address the individual needs of students with disabilities.

C. Use of Assistive Technologies:

- Training programs often incorporate sessions on the use of assistive technologies to support students with disabilities. This can include training on accessible learning materials and technology that enhances the learning experience for all students.

D. Positive Behavior Support and Inclusive Classroom Management:

- Teachers receive guidance on creating inclusive classroom environments by implementing positive behavior support strategies. This involves fostering a supportive atmosphere that encourages the participation of all students.

E. Identification and Assessment of Special Needs:

- Teachers are trained to identify and assess students with special needs. This involves understanding various disabilities, recognising signs of learning challenges, and conducting assessments to determine appropriate interventions.

F. Community Engagement and Sensitisation:

- Teacher training programs often emphasise community engagement and sensitisation to reduce societal stigmas associated with disabilities. This helps create a more inclusive school community that supports the needs of all students.

G. Collaboration with Special Educators:

- Teachers may receive training on collaborating with special educators and other professionals to provide additional support for students with disabilities. This collaborative approach ensures a holistic and inclusive education experience.

These teacher training initiatives contribute to building a set of educators who are well-prepared to create inclusive learning environments, fostering a more inclusive and accessible education system in Bangladesh. Ongoing professional development and support are essential to sustain and enhance these efforts over time.

Handbook of Inclusive Education

The Government of Bangladesh implemented the National Education Policy in 2010, leading to consequential changes in the curriculum of the Teaching Quality Improvement Project in alignment with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) guidelines from 2012. As a result of these developments, a publication titled "**Ektivuto Shikkha Pustok**" was released to serve as a guideline for IE. This instructional material is specifically designed to assist educators in enhancing their capabilities to effectively facilitate the learning of all students in mainstream classrooms, with a particular emphasis on the inclusion of students with disabilities.

The content of the book delves into various aspects, including the fundamental characteristics of an inclusive school and the procedural steps to transform a school into an inclusive institution. It elaborates on the role of school leaders, the formulation of vision and mission, the cultivation of a conducive school culture, teacher training, vocational education, counselling services, parental involvement, and the significance of special educators. The discussion extends to attitudinal restructuring and the evaluation of readiness for inclusion.

It emphasises the roles played by teachers and parents in the early identification of students with disabilities, detailing specific referral and assessment processes. The concept of disability is explored emphasising a rights-based approach. Notably, it highlights the creation of a barrier-free environment, encompassing infrastructural modifications, accessible transportation, inclusive information and communication, and availability of school resources.

Further topics covered include curriculum planning, teaching methodologies, and assessment techniques within the framework of inclusive education. The document discusses multiple intelligences and the implementation of the buddy system in the teaching-learning process. It also addresses practical aspects such as the development of lesson plans and individual education plans for students with disabilities, the utilisation of assistive technology and teaching aids, sensory integration, life skills, the provision of disability certificates, and government concessions. It also explores strategies for continuing education in emergency situations.

5. Best practice in Bangladeshi Educational institutions

When fostering inclusivity in education, it is important to recognise and accommodate the diverse needs of students with disabilities during assessments. A spectrum of disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), physical disability, visual disability, speech disability, hearing disability, and deaf blindness, should be considered in examination practices. This chapter explores the nuanced strategies that can be employed to create a fair and accessible examination environment for students with diverse abilities.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD):

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders often benefit from modified examination papers, extra time, and short tests. Observing students in different learning environments, including classrooms, special classes, and on the school bus or cafeteria, can offer insights into their unique needs. Interviewing students and analysing their previous records contribute to a comprehensive understanding. Adaptations made can create a comfortable and supportive atmosphere that allows individuals with ASD to demonstrate their knowledge effectively.

Physical Disability:

Assessment for students with physical disabilities involves evaluating fitness levels and providing additional time during examinations. Grace marking (upgrading to a pass a close fail) acknowledges the challenges students may face. Changing the assessment format to a more comfortable one, such as an oral exam or presentation, can enhance accessibility. Note-takers and assistive technologies, along with modifications in the examination hall, further facilitate a conducive examination environment.

Visual Disability:

For students with visual disabilities, assistive computer software is essential in providing access to examination materials. Necessary modifications in question formats and interactive assessments ensure equitable participation. Assessing throughout the semester or year, instead of relying solely on one examination, offers a more reliable evaluation strategy.

Speech Disability:

Individuals with speech disabilities may require additional time during exams and benefit from assistive computer software. Substituting oral examinations or presentations with alternative forms of assessment acknowledges diverse communication abilities and ensures fair evaluation.

Hearing Disability:

Students with hearing disabilities may require alternate assessments, modifications in exam duration, and assessments throughout the semester or year. Low cut-off marks and substitution of oral examinations/presentations with different forms of assessment acknowledge the unique challenges faced by individuals with hearing disabilities. Providing visual references, assistive software, sign language interpreters, and scribes further contribute to a more inclusive examination environment.

Deaf Blindness:

Deaf blind individuals benefit from various aids, including note-takers, scribes, interpreters, readers, and assistive software. Substituting oral examinations or presentations with alternative formats, grace marks, lower cut-off marks, modification in exam duration, and large prints on question papers are essential considerations to ensure a fair assessment for individuals with deaf blindness.

In conclusion, creating an inclusive examination environment requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the unique needs of students with diverse abilities. These adaptations go beyond mere accommodations; they signify a commitment to recognising and respecting the individuality of each learner. By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can move closer to achieving the goal of providing equal opportunities for success to all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. In embracing inclusive examination practices, we pave the way for a more equitable educational landscape that celebrates diversity and empowers every student to reach their full potential.

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6. Policies Developed by NGOs

Inclusion in Bangladesh, Education Profiles

This educational profile offers a comprehensive overview of inclusive education in Bangladesh spanning the years 2010 to 2023. Focusing on four key domains—Enabling Environment, Demand, Service Delivery, and Monitoring and Measuring Quality—the profile aims to capture the nation's efforts in ensuring the inclusion of students with disabilities in Bangladesh's education system, serving over 40 million diverse learners (BANBEIS, 2022). In a country where 10% of people have a disability, promoting social inclusion and equity for children with disabilities has become a fundamental aspect of educational planning and policy.

The government has created policy to help disability inclusion, and commitments to international conventions that guarantee non-discrimination in education. National Disability Policy in 1995 institutionalised guidelines for early intervention, education, rehabilitation, and employment for persons with disabilities. Bangladesh is obligated by constitution to provide a universal system of education.

Inclusive Education Governance in Bangladesh: Policies, Progress, and Challenges:

Governance and Inclusive Education in Bangladesh have seen significant developments over the past decade, with a focus on policies, legislation, and practical implications. The government has fostered a supportive policy environment for disability inclusion, although there is no specific policy on inclusive education. Existing laws and commitments to international conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensure non-discrimination in education for all children. The 1972 Constitution, amended in 2014, mandates Bangladesh to provide a universal system of education, extending free and compulsory education to all children. Recommendations for future constitutional amendments include explicit mention of 'disability' to enhance protection against discrimination. The Primary Education Act of 1990 and the first National Disability Policy in 1995 laid the groundwork for compulsory primary education and guidelines for early intervention, education, rehabilitation, and employment for persons with disabilities.

A comprehensive list of domestic laws, policies, and programs underlines the government's commitment to inclusive education. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2010 provides options for integration or separate schooling based on the degree of a child's disability. However, the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 has a narrow definition of inclusive education, limited to children with disabilities. The draft National Education Act 2016 aims to raise education quality through inclusive practices. The Ministry of Social Welfare manages special schools, indicating a welfare-oriented approach to disability. The Seventh Five-Year Plan 2016–2020 highlighted insufficient support for learners with disabilities, prompting the

government's commitment to strengthen access and quality in the Eighth Five-Year Plan (2021–2025).

While existing laws and policies provide a foundation for inclusive education, improvements are needed to guarantee non-discrimination based on disability. Aligning definitions with international frameworks, such as the CRPD, will help foster a rights-based perspective and broader views on disability. This analysis underlines the importance of translating policy guidelines into effective practices and addressing challenges at the classroom level for the successful implementation of inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Learning Environments

As per the Constitution of Bangladesh (ref. Article 17, a, b, c), the state ensures the right to education, with explicit measures articulated in Article 28.3 of Part III to safeguard human rights, particularly for people with disabilities (Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs, 2000). Consequently, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) is entrusted with the responsibility of delivering primary educational services to all children, while secondary education is overseen by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Various approaches are adopted for the education of students with Disabilities, ranging from mainstream schooling for those with mild disabilities to specialised educational services provided by the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) for severe cases. MoSW provides educational services through its varied special education institutions located in different parts of the country in an attempt to ensure mainstream education within the public schooling system.

The National Education Policy (NEP, 2010) reaffirms the role of MoPME in delivering primary education services to students with disabilities. Additionally, the policy underlines that the ministry is committed to ensuring standards and fostering competency through outcome-based education, inclusive curriculum development, teacher training, and infrastructure enhancement.

In alignment with these directives, the Primary Education Development Project-IV (PDEP-4) has modified its building designs to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education.

Teachers and Support Personnel

To enhance the quality of secondary education, the Government of Bangladesh has implemented various initiatives, including the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP). Launched in 2005 and concluded in 2012, this project, jointly funded by the Government of Bangladesh, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), aimed to address equity and quality issues in the country's secondary education system. The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), operating as the implementing agency (Project Management Unit) under the Ministry of Education (MOE), collaborated with partner organisations the National University and the National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) [4].

Aligned with the project's philosophy, the education of teaching professionals was considered integral to an inclusive educational environment. In addition to providing professional learning opportunities, the project plan encompassed various supportive activities designed to enhance the implementation of inclusive education in actual classroom settings. One component of the project focused on improving physical facilities to eliminate barriers to movement, modifying the teacher education curriculum, and introducing continuous professional development (CPD). Simultaneously, subject-based professional development activities aimed at strengthening classroom teachers with provisions for inclusive practices constituted another significant strand of the initiative.

7. Key challenges for effective inclusive education policy implementation

Looking forward, Bangladesh possesses significant opportunities to improve the accessibility of inclusive education for children with disabilities. Technological advancements, including assistive devices and digital learning platforms, can play a crucial role in meeting diverse learning needs. Furthermore, it is imperative to invest in teacher training programs and professional development. Specialised training can equip educators with inclusive teaching strategies, adaptive techniques, and a comprehensive understanding of varied learning needs. Collaborative initiatives involving educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, government bodies, and parents are indispensable for constructing a supportive and inclusive educational system.

A comparative examination of inclusive and non-inclusive education systems in Bangladesh underlines the transformative impact of inclusive education on children with disabilities. Inclusive classrooms foster an environment that nurtures empathy, understanding, and mutual respect among students, cultivating a sense of belonging. Personal experiences and success stories underline the profound influence of inclusive education in empowering people with disabilities to surmount challenges and prosper.

Efforts should extend beyond the educational realm to cultivate a more inclusive society. Public awareness campaigns must be conducted to counteract stigma, challenge misconceptions, and advocate for inclusivity. Community engagement is vital for reshaping societal attitudes towards people with disabilities. Advocacy initiatives, including seminars, workshops, and media campaigns, can illuminate the rights of people with disabilities and the advantages of inclusive education. Moreover, collaboration with policymakers can result in the formulation and enforcement of inclusive policies prioritising the needs and rights of people with disabilities.

To augment the accessibility of inclusive holistic education for learners with disabilities in Bangladesh, several imperative measures should be taken. First and foremost, strict monitoring and implementation of inclusive education policies are essential to ensure effective enforcement and allocation of adequate resources.

Secondly, there is a need for increased investment in inclusive infrastructure and assistive technologies, encompassing ramps, elevators, accessible toilets, and assistive devices, to establish physically accessible learning environments.

Thirdly, the development of comprehensive educator training programs emphasising inclusive teaching methodologies and the creation of inclusive classrooms should be undertaken through collaborative endeavours between teacher training institutions, education boards, and non-governmental organisations.

Fourthly, fostering collaboration and partnerships among educators, parents, support professionals, and relevant stakeholders is crucial to building a robust support network. The formulation of an inclusive curriculum and flexible assessment methods accommodating diverse learning needs is imperative for effective education.

Additionally, public awareness campaigns should be conducted to counteract stigma and raise awareness about the rights and capabilities of people with disabilities.

These recommendations, when implemented collectively, will contribute to a more inclusive educational landscape in Bangladesh, empowering people with disabilities to thrive and fully participate in society.

In Bangladesh, advancing inclusive, holistic education for learners with disabilities demands concerted efforts from all stakeholders. By addressing challenges, investing in resources and training, fostering collaboration, and advocating for policy changes, Bangladesh can create a more inclusive educational landscape where every learner, regardless of their abilities, has equal opportunities to learn, grow, and contribute to society.

The active involvement of organisations such as the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), Inclusion International Bangladesh, the Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID), and the Bangladesh Protibandhi Kalyan Samity (BPKS) is instrumental in propelling progress towards inclusive education in the country.

Through a combination of inclusive policies, specialised training, technological advancements, and societal changes, Bangladesh can pave the way for a brighter future for learners with disabilities, ensuring their full participation and integration in all aspects of life.

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8. Review of Policies of Inclusive Education by Researchers

The review of policies on inclusive education in Bangladesh highlights challenges and areas of improvement. The success of inclusive education (IE) is often measured by changes in teachers' knowledge and skills resulting from professional learning initiatives. However, the study reveals inadequate understanding and varied interpretations of IE among secondary teachers, pointing to the need for effective professional development.

The analysis reflects two decades of milestones in inclusive education reform, still, issues embedded in policies oppose IE philosophy, leading to conceptual confusion among practitioners. The policies, mostly mirroring international guidelines, lack a context-specific approach and exhibit a top-down imposition, causing concern among educators. Experts suggest a gap between policies and practices, with teachers hesitating to engage in collaborative efforts due to the top-down nature of policies. IE is seen as sustainable in a collaborative environment, emphasising the need for engagement with various stakeholders. The policies, however, lack specific guidelines for collaboration.

While policies contribute to increased enrolment and training of teachers, the impact on challenging teachers' beliefs and practices remains limited. The reviews emphasise the importance of changing teachers' belief systems through professional development for effective implementation of inclusive education. The analysis underlines the need for context-specific, collaborative, and sustainable policies that not only bring extrinsic changes but also foster intrinsic changes in thinking and practices for successful inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Title: Inclusive education and education policies in India: An overview

Khan [Khan, T. A. (2012). Secondary school teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in Bangladesh. *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*, 6(2), 102–118.]

This paper identifies shortcomings in the TQI-SEP (Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project) professional development activities, indicating a misalignment with effective approaches. Teachers lack individualised learning opportunities, hindering the adoption of inclusive practices. While TQI-SEP raises awareness, daily implementation of inclusion in routine classroom instruction remains a challenge.

Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Are the Guiding Principles Aligned with Successful Practices?

Malak, Saiful & Begum, Hosne & Habib, Md Ahsan & Banu, & Roshid, Mohammad. (2014). Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Are the Guiding Principles Aligned with Successful Practices?. 10.1007/978-94-6209-692-9_9.

The study examines the inclusive education (IE) policies in Bangladesh, assessing their alignment with international standards and their implementation challenges. The findings reveal that the IE policies in Bangladesh are inadequately understood by practitioners and teachers. Teachers' attitudes and limited professional development emerge as major barriers to IE implementation. The study emphasises that policy guidelines in the Bangladeshi context may be insufficiently effective.

Two major projects, the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) and the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP), play pivotal roles in IE implementation. However, challenges persist, including a lack of high-quality professional development, resulting in inadequate understanding and varied interpretations of IE among secondary teachers.

The study recommends a critical review of IE policies in Bangladesh, emphasising the need for context-specific guidelines. It raises concerns about the top-down approach, suggesting a collaborative approach involving policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders. The observed discrepancies between policy objectives and actual classroom practices, coupled with teachers' unchanged belief systems, underline the limitations of current policy tools. The study concludes that policy documents in Bangladesh's IE environment may be low-leverage tools, emphasising the importance of fostering intrinsic change in thinking and practices for successful IE implementation.

Special Training for Special Needs: Evaluating Teacher Preparedness for Inclusive Education in Bangladesh

Hoque, Mohammed Raihanul. "Special Training for Special Needs: Evaluating Teacher Preparedness for Inclusive Education in Bangladesh." *Journal of Socio-Educational Dynamics-JSED* 1.2 (2023): 97-105.

This research investigates the preparedness of pre-service teachers in Bangladesh for inclusive education, focusing on attitudes and perceived teaching efficacy, with attention to educational level, gender, and training duration. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, revealing that secondary-level pre-service teachers exhibit more positive attitudes and higher self-efficacy. Female pre-service teachers, while displaying positive attitudes, report lower perceived teaching efficacy than males. Qualitative insights highlight curriculum gaps at the primary level and stronger IE integration at the secondary level. The study underlines the need for a uniform curriculum addressing IE across educational levels and gender-sensitive training interventions. Recommendations include comprehensive curriculum reform, practical IE training enhancements, and policy support for prioritising IE. The findings emphasise the significance of

teacher preparedness for IE success and advocate for reforms to create an equitable educational landscape at the higher level in Bangladesh. The study calls for further research to refine the teacher education framework for IE, ensuring quality education for all students rights.

Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Policy and Practice

Malak, Md Saiful, et al. "Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Policy and Practice." *Australian Association for Research in Education* (2013).

The findings on inclusive education policies in Bangladesh reveal a significant gap between policy intent and actual implementation. While the country has endorsed major international declarations and enacted supportive policies over the past two decades, the study indicates a disconnect between policy guidelines and their understanding among practitioners and classroom teachers. The policies, primarily influenced by international treaties, lack effective implementation strategies at the grassroots level.

Two major projects, the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) and Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP), have been instrumental in promoting inclusive education. However, challenges persist, with teachers' attitudes and limited professional development identified as major barriers. The study emphasises that policy guidelines, though existing, are insufficiently effective tools in the context of Bangladesh. The need for further research to understand the practice of inclusive education at the classroom level is highlighted.

Specific policy analyses reveal concerns regarding contradictory statements within policies, emphasising a need for clearer guidelines and support for teachers. The TQI-SEP project, while making strides in some areas, faces challenges in achieving full inclusion. Classroom practices have seen some positive changes, but the study again points out the inadequacy of professional development in addressing the diverse needs of learners. The study underlines the importance of aligning policies with the local context, addressing conceptual confusion among practitioners, and enhancing collaboration for effective implementation. The findings suggest a crucial need for policies fostering intrinsic shifts in thinking and practice to truly promote inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Rethinking Digital Financial Inclusion: Evidence from Bangladesh

A., & Naima, U. (2021). Rethinking digital financial inclusion: Evidence from Bangladesh. *Technology in Society*, 64. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2020.101509>

The study, conducted in Moheshkhali, Bangladesh, related to digital financial inclusion in rural areas, focusing on marginalised communities. The research identifies a gap between assumptions in financial inclusion discourse and the actual access and use of digital technologies. Although digital services have improved physical access to financial services, their underutilisation is attributed to issues such as insufficient connectivity, low financial literacy, and limited social awareness. Key findings suggest that rural populations cannot achieve digital financial inclusion solely through access to digital devices. A comprehensive approach that addresses digital and social aspects of financial inclusion is needed.

Challenges identified include issues like financial literacy, basic connectivity, and social awareness. The research suggests that the adoption of digital financial services requires a framework that goes beyond traditional 'supply-oriented' financial infrastructure.

Recommendations include focusing on digital skill development, financial literacy, and citizen-centric, pro-poor financial products/services. For government and policy stakeholders, the study recommends prioritising financial inclusion, revising ICT policies for rural areas, and promoting digital skills and financial literacy. Financial institutions and Mobile Financial Service (MFS) providers are advised to mentor vulnerable groups, lower transaction costs, and simplify banking regulations for rural customers. Overall, the study proposes an integrated framework for digital financial inclusion, emphasising the interconnectedness of technological and social factors in achieving tangible outcomes for rural communities.

Policies for Achieving Inclusion in Higher Education

Salmi, Jamil, and Anna D'Addio. "Policies for achieving inclusion in higher education." *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 5.1 (2021): 47-72.

The article emphasises the vital role of inclusive higher education policies in achieving social justice and economic efficiency. It reviews disparities across regions and countries, focusing on under-represented equity target groups. They find the lack of inclusive opportunities results in a loss of human capital for individuals and society. The effectiveness of equity policies emphasises the importance of combining economic aid with non-monetary interventions to address barriers faced by underprivileged students. The study cites a 2019 World Bank meta-analysis, revealing that interventions implemented together are more effective than isolated efforts. Successful measures include financial aid, outreach, bridging programs, reformed selection procedures, preferential admission, and retention programs. A survey in 71 countries indicates that affirmative action, reformed admission criteria, outreach, bridge programs, and retention programs are commonly supported.

The article suggests that countries should adopt a mix of measures and provides examples of successful programs. To address high dropout rates, countries implement first-year induction, academic advisors, tutoring, and mentoring. Specialised universities or community colleges are established in some nations to create a culturally inclusive learning environment. They highlight the importance of individualised support, including differentiated instruction for learning disabilities. It calls for a comprehensive approach to reduce disparities, emphasises a long-term commitment to equity policies and the need for impact studies. Recommendations include defining equity comprehensively, conducting systematic impact studies, establishing robust information systems for monitoring, prioritising gender balance in STEM, and giving special attention to students with disabilities. In conclusion, the article argues that equity in higher education is essential for social justice and efficiency, urging a proactive approach to overcome barriers and achieve inclusive access and success.

9. Recommendations

Recommendations for Government

1. Identify the volume of disabled people and types of disabilities and understand their specific needs.
2. Set up a committee to assess their needs, seamlessly incorporate the expertise, and integrate the knowledge and skills to align disabled students with the mainstream education system.
3. Implement a comprehensive teacher training program to address any existing gaps.
4. Embed the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for inclusive education within the national professional standards for teachers.
5. Align inclusive education standards with the broader framework of school quality standards.
6. Assess and enhance monitoring and evaluation systems to promote the progress of inclusive education.

Recommendations for development partners

1. Support professional development initiatives.
2. Advocate inclusive education and discontinuation of segregated provisions.
3. Develop a strong communication strategy.
4. Support referral mechanisms.

Recommendations for further research

1. Assess the sustainable implementation of policies supporting inclusive education.
2. Conduct research on knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs on disability and inclusion.
3. Review professional development programs for school leaders.
4. Assess the gaps in skills and competencies in teacher education.

Observations on IE in Bangladesh

1. The inclusive education landscape is dominated by disability inclusion initiatives.
2. Intersectionality needs to be incorporated into all inclusion initiatives.
3. Implementation of already existing affirmative laws needs to be strengthened.

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